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Scoreboards vs. Mortarboards: Major Donor Behavior and Intercollegiate Athletics

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Scoreboards vs. Mortarboards: Major Donor Behavior and Intercollegiate Athletics

Jeffrey L. Stinson, Dennis R. Howard

Abstract

In an era where intercollegiate athletics departments are increasingly reliant on and successful in obtaining charitable donations, three fundamental questions surrounding charitable contributions to educational institutions were empirically examined. Who gives to educational institutions in support of academic and athletics programs? Does the improved performance of athletic teams influence both types of giving to educational institutions? Does increased giving to athletics have a negative impact on charitable giving to educational programs at the same institution? An in-depth analysis of donor behavior at a major public university revealed that contrary to popular assumption, both alumni and non-alumni made gifts to both athletic and academic programs, though the two groups differed significantly in their behavior. Evidence indicated a winning athletics program may have significantly impacted alumni giving behavior, and that increased giving to athletics by both alumni and non-alumni was linked to a decline in academic fundraising at the same institution.

Introduction

A recent NCAA report indicated that charitable contributions to athletic departments at Division IA schools have more than doubled over the past decade, growing from an average of $1.55 million in 1990 to $3.5 million in 1999. By 1999, funds raised from charitable donations accounted for an average of 17% of a Division IA athletic department's total budget (Fulks, 2000). Despite the substantial growth, a number of fundamental questions regarding charitable contributions to athletic programs remain relatively unexplored:

1. Who gives to educational institutions in support of academic and/or athletic programs? Is it primarily non-alumni who contribute to intercollegiate athletics programs? Is it primarily alumni who contribute to academic programs?
2. Does the improved performance of intercollegiate athletic teams, specifically high profile sports including football and/or men's and women's basketball, affect both types of giving to the educational institution?
3. Does increased giving to athletics by alumni and non-alumni have a negative impact on charitable giving to educational programs at the same institution?

This study is based on an in-depth analysis of donor behavior at a major public university whose athletic teams compete at the Division IA level. The institution under study offers a unique window of opportunity for examining the extent to which improved team performance may impact both athletic and academic fund raising. Over the past decade, the university's athletic teams, in particular football and men's and women's basketball, have achieved unparalleled success, moving from perennial *middle of the pack* status to regularly contending for conference and, occasionally, national championships.

A review of the literature suggests that formal hypothesis development regarding the basic questions

> ***"Fewer than 2% of alumni contribute to their alma mater's athletics program; the majority instead focused their giving on their school's academic programs. Non-alumni, on the other hand, donated almost exclusively to the intercollegiate athletic program."*** —Murray Sperber

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addressed in this study is premature. Many of the assertions concerning donor behavior found in the literature lack credible empirical support, and others offer contradictory findings. The current study seeks to offer an empirical foundation for future hypothesis development and testing.

Research Question 1: Do alumni donors give primarily to academics and non-alumni donors give primarily to athletics?

> *At Big-time U's, a small percentage, usually in single digits, of alumni contribute to the school's intercollegiate athletics program (a similarly low percentage donates to its educational programs). However, often the main contributors to athletic departments are boosters—rabid sports fans who, unlike alumni, never attended the institution and whose interest in it focuses almost exclusively on its college sports teams (Sperber 2000, p. 258).*

In two books discussing the impact of "big-time intercollegiate athletics" on colleges and universities, Sperber (1990, 2000) commented extensively on donor behavior toward both academics and athletics. Sperber (1990) asserted that fewer than 2% of alumni contribute to their alma mater's athletics program; the majority instead focused their giving on their school's academic programs. Non-alumni, on the other hand, donated almost exclusively to the intercollegiate athletic program.

This distinction in giving behavior assumes alumni are less susceptible to fluctuations in giving with changes in athletic success, as "alumni giving is independent of college sports success or failure" (Sperber 2000, p. 256). Instead, alumni giving is driven by their academic relationship to the institution. Graduates are assumed to be proud of their degrees, and wish to *repay* the institution through their donations. Sperber argued that schools located at or near the top of *U.S. News and World Report's* annual ranking of alumni giving at American colleges and Universities (as a percentage of alumni making a gift in the previous year) rankings tend to be known for their educational reputation as opposed to their athletic reputation. In contrast, schools with top college sports teams (Wisconsin, Michigan, and UCLA are cited), all have far lower rankings on the alumni giving list.

The Identity Salience Model of Nonprofit Relationship Marketing Success offers one plausible explanation for this giving discrepancy (Arnett, German, & Hunt, 2003). Identity salience, a measure of the importance of an identity to self, is proposed to mediate the relationship between *relationship-inducing factors* and donating behavior. In the case of alumni donors, to the extent that such relationship-inducing factors as participation and organizational prestige are centered around the academic mission of the institution, as Sperber argues is the case with the *U.S. News and World Report* top schools, one would expect a more salient donor identity with academics and more charitable giving directed at academic programs.

A recent study offered empirical support for the notion that alumni giving is more heavily influenced by academic-related factors than athletic success. Rhoads and Gerking's (2000) 10-year study of 87 NCAA Division IA institutions found that academic tradition and status had a far greater impact on alumni giving than the performance of athletic teams. Carnegie level I institutions, which represent the highest level of research institution in the Carnegie Foundation's classification system, were found to receive 41% more support per student than other institutions. Additionally, a 100-point increase in incoming student average SAT scores correlated with 51% more alumni support per student.

Brown (1991) in a study of Ball State University alumni found that the academic reputation of the institution was a primary determinant of donor behavior. A substantial majority (61%) of the alumni donors equated the university's reputation with the quality of its faculty and educational programs. Intercollegiate athletics were insignificant in determining the donor behavior of this group.

"As with the impact of athletic success on donor behavior, the limited empirical evidence considering the impact of donations to athletics on academic giving is less than clear."

Although some evidence supports Sperber's view that alumni donations are driven by academics rather than athletics, available literature (Rhoads & Gerking 2000, Brown 1991) does not substantiate his assertion that non-alumni (sometimes referred to as boosters) give exclusively to athletics. No empirical evidence was found to support this claim. In addition, research on institutional giving to date has not recognized that alumni and non-alumni can direct a portion of their institutional gifts to *both* academics and athletics. It is conceivable that the pattern of institutional giving may be more complex than the simple either/or differentiation suggested in previous studies. Therefore, this research will examine the donor behavior of both

alumni and non-alumni, and the extent to which each of these donor groups split their annual donations across athletics and academics.

Research Question 2: Does winning have a significant impact on alumni giving?

Of the three research questions examined in this study, the relationship between winning and alumni giving has received the most attention. Despite this, there is still no clear answer to how athletic success impacts alumni academic giving. The many studies conducted on this topic often contradict each other and taken together produce equivocal results as to whether successful intercollegiate athletic teams influence alumni to donate more to their alma maters.

The aforementioned Rhoads and Gerking (2000) study also examined the impact of year-to-year changes in athletic success on total giving by alumni. Significant increases in alumni donations were associated with increased athletic success. Contributions were measured as *dollars per student currently enrolled* to control for institution size. A football bowl game win was found to raise alumni contributions per student by 7.3%, while alumni contributions fell 13.6% when a basketball team was placed on probation.

Grimes and Chressanths (1994) also offered support for the positive impact of athletic success. The authors studied the giving patterns of Mississippi State University alumni from 1962-1991, and found that total contributions were positively related to the overall winning percentage of major (basketball, football, and baseball) intercollegiate athletic teams. The researchers found that each one percent increase in overall winning percentage of the three teams was correlated with a substantial, significant increase in total giving to the institution.

In contrast, several studies have concluded that no significant relationship exists between athletic success and giving to the institution. As part of a comprehensive study of higher education, Shulman and Bowen (2001) examined giving data from eight private, academically selective colleges and universities that compete athletically at the NCAA Division IA level. Athletic success was found to be an insignificant factor in alumni giving. However, it is quite possible that the findings were a function of the elite academic nature of the schools included in Shulman and Bowen's study. All eight schools were among the most prestigious higher education institutions in the U.S., including several Ivy League schools, Stanford, and Northwestern. Each of these schools has higher levels of academic than athletics prestige. Some of the schools offer only academic scholarships. Consistent with the Arnett et. al's (2003) Identity Salience Model, we expect donor behavior to follow the institutional focus on academics at these institutions and donors to direct their dollars to maintain the academic prestige of the university.

Two earlier studies also support the general lack of relationship between athletic success and charitable behavior among alumni. In a study of the annual campaigns of 135 schools, Sigelman and Carter (1979) found no relationship between athletic success and increased alumni giving. Gaski and Etzel (1984) examined 99 NCAA Division I institutions for donor behavior by alumni status (alumni vs. non-alumni) and fund type (annual fund vs. other), concluding that there was no evidence of the impact of athletic success on overall giving. While the influence of winning on alumni donor behavior is not clear, Gaski and Etzel (1984) remains the only study to date that has examined athletic team performance on the donor behavior of non-alumni.

The current study provides an empirical basis for examining whether winning has a differential influence on alumni *and* non-alumni and how such differences manifest themselves in the giving behavior of the two groups. Are non-alums, with few or no academic ties to the university, more sensitive to the fortunes of the institution's athletic teams? Does winning encourage greater overall financial support to just the institution's athletic program or does athletic success also spur more giving to academic programs? The intent of this study is to examine these questions and provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between intercollegiate athletic success and donor behavior.

Research Question 3: Does athletics giving undermine giving to academics?

Sperber (2000) asserted that athletic departments "actively undermine efforts to raise money from alumni for educational programs" (p. 259). Labeling this the "college-sports-equals-alumni-giving myth," he noted an increasing focus by athletic departments on wealthy alumni to support larger programs and facilities. He contended that after securing a major gift for a new athletic facility from a particular alumnus it would be unlikely for that same individual to donate a major gift to an academic unit of the institution.

Additionally, Sperber (2000) suggested that the highly publicized athletic programs of most Division IA institutions could result in alumni cutting their gifts in times of negative publicity. He offered the case of Southern Methodist University where alumni giving to academics dropped following the football team receiving the *death penalty* - the severest of NCAA sanctions that completely shuts down a program for a period of time - in the 1980s. Furthermore, during the pre-

scandal winning years, alumni giving to academics did not increase.

The opposite side of the spectrum is offered by Shulman and Bowen (2001), who write, "There is certainly no indication in the data we have collected that private giving to athletics today is so substantial (in either the number of donors or the size of the average gift) that it is likely to detract in any substantial way from fundraising for broader educational purposes" (Shulman & Bowen, 2001, p. 215).

As the quote indicates, Shulman and Bowen (2001) found no significant impact of giving to athletic programs on giving to academic programs at the eight Division IA schools included in their sample. The authors classified alumni gifts as either athletic or academic. There was no significant reduction in giving to academics associated with giving to athletics; thus, the authors concluded that no relationship between the two types of giving exists.

"In an environment of heavy competition for donors and their gifts, the ability of athletic departments to offer a valuable tangible benefit in exchange for a gift may attract donors who would otherwise make an academic gift."

However, their findings might be a function of the very narrow range of schools in the sample. All eight schools included in their analysis are heavily endowed, academically elite, private institutions, leading the authors to note "the practices and leading issues in the Division IA schools are qualitatively different from those of the other institutions [in this study]" (p. xxiv). If the assumption that alumni donors give predominantly to academic programs is true, the schools in this sample may be less susceptible to any decline in academic giving as athletic contributions rise. It remains untested whether such a situation would hold at a public institution with much lower levels of alumni support. Yet these factors seem to contribute to the authors conclusion that "[i]t would be comforting to assume that the apparent lack of competition for gifts between athletics and other institutional purposes would continue into the future. Unfortunately, we do not think such confidence is warranted" (Shulman & Bowen, 2001, pg. 38).

Finally, one earlier study by McCormick and Tinsley (1990) found that giving to athletics had a positive impact on academic giving, estimating that a 10% increase in giving to athletics was associated with a 5% increase in academic giving. The authors examined alumni giving data at Clemson University, in South Carolina, for the time period 1979-1983.

As with the impact of athletic success on donor behavior, the limited empirical evidence considering the impact of donations to athletics on academic giving is less than clear. The current study seeks to directly examine the relationship between the two types of giving for both alumni and non-alumni.

An Examination of University of Oregon Donors

The sample for this study includes all donors making gifts of $1,000 or more between 1994 and 2002 to the Annual Giving Program at the University of Oregon. The university conducted a capital campaign ending in 1998. However, large, non-recurrent capital gifts (both athletic and academic) donated as part of the campaign were not classified as annual gifts and, therefore, not included as part of the database used in this study.

A minimum $1,000 gift to the Annual Giving Program entitles the donor to membership in the President's Club and represents the first category of *major* donation at the University of Oregon. The number of major donors has grown from 779 in 1994 to 2,309 in 2002. In addition, major donors were found not only to give more but to also give more consistently than those making smaller annual contributions. Major donors had a significantly greater propensity to make recurrent annual gifts than minor donors, making this subset of donors a more relevant sample for examining the research questions under consideration in this study. Furthermore, while major donors constitute only 4.3% of the total number making gifts to the University, these donors contribute 72% of the total charitable revenues.

The entire giving history of each donor making an annual gift of $1,000 or more during the selected time frame was extracted from the University's Benefactor ™ database, compiled and managed by the University of Oregon Foundation, which is the academic fundraising body at the university. Each gift was subsequently coded as made by an alumnus or non-alumnus, and donations were divided into three giving areas.

- *Athletic gifts* represent gifts directed towards the athletic department, including all gifts made to the athletic fundraising entity, the Duck Athletic Fund.
- *Academic gifts* represent all gifts directed towards an academic program or unit, as well as all undirected gifts that may be used at the discretion of the university president.
- *Other gifts* are those donations directed at a non-academic, non-athletic unit of the University. Examples include the university

theatre, the art museum and the Oregon Bach Festival.

Fiscal year 1994 was selected as the starting point for analysis as it represented the first year for which reliable giving data on all donors to the University of Oregon Foundation was available.

The University of Oregon is a mid-size public research institution that sponsors 15 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I varsity athletic programs. Oregon offers a unique and interesting opportunity to examine the relationship between athletic success, athletic fundraising, and academic fundraising. The combination of unprecedented athletic success and major athletic fundraising efforts during the sampling period provides a rare window in which to examine the research questions of interest. No major changes in the university's academic program (i.e., change in Carnegie classification) occurred during the time period considered in this study, creating an unintended *natural* experimental condition in which to examine the potential influence of athletic-related success on academic fundraising.

The 1994 season began an unprecedented run of success for the Oregon football program. The team played in the Rose Bowl for the first time in 40 years in 1995. Over the next seven seasons, the Oregon football team compiled a 69 and 27 record, winning two conference championships and playing in five bowl games. In 2001, the Oregon football team compiled an 11 and 1 record and ended the season ranked #2 in the nation. In 2002, the athletic department completed a $90-million expansion of Autzen Stadium. In the ten years prior to 1994, the Oregon football team had only four winning seasons, compiling a record of 58 wins and 57 losses. In 1995, the men's basketball team advanced to the NCAA Championship tournament for the first time in 34 years. From 1995-96 through 2001-02, the Oregon basketball team played in four post-season tournaments, advancing to the National Invitational Tournament Final Four in 1999 and to the NCAA Elite Eight in 2002. A campaign to fund construction of a new basketball arena was announced in early 2003.

The fortunate circumstance of having detailed donor records available at the onset of the athletic teams' run of success provided a unique opportunity for directly examining the relationship between team performance and donor behavior related to both academic and athletic giving. As noted by Grimes and Chressanths (1994) and Brooker and Klastorin (1981), while the focus on a single institution may result in the loss of reliability in generalizing the results, universities that share many common characteristics are more likely to experience similar patterns in the receipt of charitable donations. Stake (1983) argued that when there is a need to generalize only to similar cases as opposed to a population of cases, a single-institution study is an acceptable form of inquiry. The University of Oregon shares many characteristics with other public research institutions supporting NCAA Division I athletic programs, and while future research should include additional institutions, only the data from one school were considered in this study. Therefore, while the specific results of this study may not be generalizable to other institutions, similar findings at similar institutions would not be surprising.

Research Question 1:

As shown in Table 1, the data indicate that both alumni and non-alumni give to both academics and athletics, though, clearly, there are significant differences in the giving behavior of the two groups. In all but two years (1994, 1996), alumni made significantly higher gifts to academics than non-alumni, and in every year since 1994, alumni allocated a significantly larger portion of their total gift to academics than non-alumni. On the other hand, non-alumni allocated a significantly higher percentage of their total gift to athletics every sample year. However, in terms of actual average gift amount, non-alums only made a significantly higher gift to athletics in the final year of the sample (2002). Thus, the assumption that alumni give primarily to academic programs while non-alumni give primarily to intercollegiate athletic programs partially holds. Alumni do give predominantly more to academics, but they also donate large amounts, both in terms of average gift amount and percent of total gift, to intercollegiate athletics.

Further analysis shows that in the most recent year, 38.7% of alumni allocated their entire gift to the athletics program and 69.5% of alumni allocated at least a portion of their gift to athletics, suggesting higher alumni participation in athletic fundraising at Oregon than the 2% asserted by Sperber (2000). Over 36% of non-alumni in 2002 allocated at least a portion of their gift to a non-athletic program. Together, these results clearly demonstrate that both alumni and non-alumni give to both academics and athletic programs, and that a simple alumni/non-alumni dichotomy is not an adequate explanation of donor behavior.

The data were then analyzed by allocation groups (Table 2): a group allocating their entire gift to academics, a group allocating their entire gift to athletics, and a group making a split gift (both athletic and academic). No statistical differences were found between alumni and non-alumni allocating their entire gift to athletics or academics. It appears that only in the case of split gifts is the alumni/non-alumni distinction significant in donor behavior.

Table 1

University of Oregon Donor Summary of AGP Gifts over $1,000

Year	Total number of donors in parentheses	% donors giving total gift to athletics	% donors giving total gift to academics	% gift allocated to athletics	% gift allocated to academics	% gift allocated to other	Average athletic gift	Average academic gift	Average other gift	Average total gift
1994	Alum(508)	26.8	41.5	40.40%	56.17%	3.44%	$1,010.11	$1,665.30	$64.09	$2,739.23
	Non-alum(271)	42.1	26.6	50.48%	36.41%	13.10%	$1,044.39	$1240.14	$312.06	$2,597.00
	Difference			-10.08	19.75	-9.66	-34.28	425.16	-247.78	142.23
	T-value(sig.)			-2.81(.005)	5.730(.000)	-4.873(.000)	-.261(.794)	1.803 (.072)	-3.855(.000)	.573(.567)
1995	Alum(671)	30.3	37.6	45.18%	51.86%	2.96%	$1,085.16	$1,710.00	$84.32	$2,879.36
	Non-alum(351)	45.6	24.2	54.92%	34.29%	10.79%	$1,238.56	$1,281.00	$303.66	$2,823.06
	Difference			-9.74	17.57	-7.83	-153.40	429.00	-219.34	56.30
	T-value(sig.)			-3.121(.002)	5.833(.000)	-4.963(.000)	-1.177(.240)	2.107(.035)	-3.911(.000)	.250(.802)
1996	Alum(731)	33.0	36.4	46.14%	50.74%	3.13%	$1,064.52	$1,614.04	$72.54	$2,750.97
	Non-alum(389)	48.6	23.9	56.09%	33.20%	10.70%	$981.80	$1.314.06	$305.23	$2,601.56
	Difference			-9.95	17.54	-7.58	82.71	299.58	-232.68	149.41
	T-value(sig.)			-3.355(.001)	6.167(.000)	-4.981(.000)	.832(.406)	1.476(.140)	-3.780(.000)	.713(.476)
1997	Alum(832)	32.6	36.1	47.46%	49.27%	3.28%	$1,182.44	$1,500.13	$104.42	$2,786.69
	Non-alum(481)	50.7	18.9	58.37%	29.78%	11.85%	$1,230.32	$1,116.19	$383.72	$2,730.35
	Difference			-10.92	19.49	-8.57	-47.87	383.93	-279.29	56.34
	T-value(sig.)			-4.034(.000)	7.788(.000)	-6.222(.000)	-.443(.658)	2.296(.022)	-3.308(.001)	.293(.770)
1998	Alum(907)	31.5	35.1	48.26%	47.76%	3.98%	$1,153.50	$1,428.04	$181.86	$2,763.47
	Non-alum(507)	53.1	17.8	62.22%	25.93%	11.85%	$1,367.95	$864.16	$378.11	$2,609.71
	Difference			-13.96	21.83	-7.87	-214.44	563.88	-196.24	153.76
	T-value(sig.)			-5.406(.000)	9.140(.000)	-5.548(.000)	-2.053(.040)	4.061(.000)	-2.773(.006)	.943(.346)
1999	Alum(986)	30.3	36.8	44.81%	50.11%	5.08%	$1,096.16	$1,603.21	$183.73	$2,882.86
	Non-alum(562)	53.0	17.4	60.56%	26.35%	13.09%	$1,256.91	$1,037.92	$426.20	$2,721.35
	Difference			-15.75	23.77	-8.01	-160.74	565.29	-242.47	161.52
	T-value(sig.)			-6.359(.000)	10.455(.000)	-5.591(.000)	-1.724(.085)	3.744(.000)	-3.523(.000)	.976(.329)
2000	Alum(1005)	34.2	35.0	49.36%	46.96%	3.68%	$1,201.62	$1,494.40	$139.98	$2,835.98
	Non-alum(610)	54.6	19.7	62.86%	25.83%	11.30%	$1,298.74	$928.64	$372.97	$2,600.59
	Difference			-13.50	21.12	-7.62	-97.12	565.75	-232.98	235.39
	T-value(sig.)			-5.640(.000)	9.50(.000)	-5.984(.000)	-1.139(.255)	4.048(.000)	-3.528(.000)	1.536(.125)
2001	Alum(1198)	35.7	31.5	53.77%	42.52%	3.71%	$1,477.52	$1,588.87	$163.45	$3,229.26
	Non-alum(745)	57.2	14.4	68.12%	20.74%	11.14%	$1,596.67	$684.80	$286.33	$2,567.70
	Difference			-14.35	21.78	-7.43	-119.14	904.07	-122.87	661.56
	T-value(sig.)			-6.871(.000)	11.337(.000)	-6.446(.000)	-1.216(.224)	7.318(.000)	-2.372(.018)	4.516(.000)
2002	Alumni (1385)	38.7	30.5	56.66%	38.98%	4.36%	$1,773.55	$1,427.27	$200.94	$3401.70
	Non-alum (924)	63.5	12.8	72.07%	17.95%	9.98%	$2,007.27	$568.79	$352.20	$2928.36
	Difference			-15.41	21.03	-5.62	-233.71	858.48	-151.26	473.33
	T-value(sig.)			-8.144(.000)	12.361 (.000)	-5.503(.000)	-2.115(.035)	8.318 (.000)	-2.591(.010)	3.350(.001)

Table 2
Gift by Allocation Status

Year	Total number of donors in parentheses	% donors giving total gift to athletics	Average athletic gift of previous column	% donors giving total gift to academics	Average academic gift of previous column	% donors making split gift	Average total gift of split donors	Average athletic gift of split donors	Average academic gift of split donors
1994	Alum(508)	26.8	$2,372	41.5	$2,695	31.7	$3,106	$1,183	$1,721
	Non-alum(271)	42.1	$2,022	26.6	$3,748	31.3	$2,403	$626	$804
	Difference		$350		($1,053)		$703	$557	$917
	F-value(sig.)		1.127(.289)		3.722(.055)		2.706(.101)	7.248(.008)	7.000(.009)
1995	Alum(671)	30.3	$2,095	37.6	$3,082	32.1	$3,379	$1,401	$1,716
	Non-alum(351)	45.6	$2,101	24.2	$3,959	30.2	$3,001	$931	$1,083
	Difference		($6)		($877)		$378	$470	$633
	F-value(sig.)		.001(.981)		2.707(.101)		.747(.388)	4.541(.034)	3.922(.049)
1996	Alum(731)	33.0	$1,896	36.4	$2,921	30.6	$3,467	$1,433	$1,797
	Non-alum(389)	48.6	$1,674	23.9	$4,285	27.5	$2,779	$616	$1,073
	Difference		$222		($1,364)		$688	$817	$724
	F-value(sig.)		2.373(.124)		7.158(.008)		2.364(.125)	7.678(.006)	4.928(.027)
1997	Alum(832)	32.6	$2,159	36.1	$2,766	31.3	$3,460	$1,527	$1,601
	Non-alum(481)	50.7	$2,105	18.9	$4,065	30.4	$2,944	$541	$1,155
	Difference		$54		($1299)		$516	$986	$446
	F-value(sig.)		.075(.785)		8.027(.005)		1.698(.193)	25.885(.000)	2.350(.126)
1998	Alum(907)	31.5	$2,090	35.1	$2,733	33.4	$3,430	$1,480	$1,405
	Non-alum(507)	53.1	$2,058	17.8	$3,274	29.1	$3,200	$946	$977
	Difference		$32		($541)		$230	$534	$428
	F-value(sig.)		.032(.859)		1.744(.187)		.385(.585)	6.039(.014)	2.531(.112)
1999	Alum(986)	30.3	$2,226	36.8	$3,219	32.9	$3,111	$1,281	$1,272
	Non-alum(562)	53.0	$2,012	17.4	$4,060	29.6	$3,201	$646	$1,127
	Difference		$214		($841)		($90)	$635	$145
	F-value(sig.)		1.545(.214)		3.358(.068)		.081(.776)	14.577(.000)	.456(.500)
2000	Alum(1005)	34.2	$2,266	35.0	$3,119	30.8	$3,147	$1,385	$1,306
	Non-alum(610)	54.6	$1,926	19.7	$3,663	25.7	$3,212	$959	$821
	Difference		$340		($544)		($65)	$426	$485
	F-value(sig.)		5.707(.017)		1.639(.201)		.045(.832)	6.820(.009)	5.937(.015)
2001	Alum(1198)	35.7	$2,396	31.5	$3,530	32.8	$3,843	$1,890	$1,458
	Non-alum(745)	57.2	$2,194	14.4	$2,913	28.4	$3,143	$1,202	$936
	Difference		$202		$617		$700	$688	$522
	F-value(sig.)		1.979(.160)		1.756(.186)		4.519(.034)	10.828(.001)	5.084(.025)
2002	Alumni (1385)	38.7	$2,803	30.5	$3,325	30.8	$4,233	$2,237	$1,340
	Non-alum (924)	63.5	$2,700	12.8	$3,162	23.7	$3,412	$1,230	$695
	Difference		$103		$163		$821	$1007	$645
	F-value(sig.)		.395(.530)		.152 (.697)		6.061(.014)	20.171(.000)	10.287(.001)

Research Question 2:

In this era of increasing athletic success at the University of Oregon, more alumni give more to athletics, suggesting that alumni giving may indeed be influenced by athletic success. In 1994, 58.5% of alumni donors in the sample allocated at least a portion of their gift to the intercollegiate athletics program. This percentage has risen steadily to the 69.5% of alumni donors in the sample making a gift to athletics in 2002. In terms of real donors, 297 alumni donors donated to athletics in 1994; 962 alumni made a gift to athletics in 2002. This was in a time period where growth in total alumni donors making annual gifts of $1,000 or more increased by 877 donors, suggesting that virtually every new alumni donor at this level allocated at least a portion of their gift to athletics, in addition to some previous donors who began allocating some of their gift to athletics. Finally, the average donation to athletics by this group grew from $1,010.11 in 1994 to $1,773.55 in 2002. In almost every way, alumni giving to athletics has increased with an associated increase in success by the high profile intercollegiate athletic teams at the University of Oregon.

While more subtle, athletic success may also be influencing academic giving by alumni (Table 1). The percentage of alumni donors making an academic gift has fallen from 73.2% to 61.3% since 1994. The number of alumni donors making gifts of $1,000 or more to academics has increased during the time period from 372 to 863, an increase of 491. However, this lags far behind the increase of 666 alumni donors making a major gift to the athletic department during the same time period. Still, in terms of average academic gift amount, alumni have been relatively stable, with average gifts ranging from $1,427.27 to $1,710.00. These data suggest a possible neutral to negative influence of athletic success on academic giving by alumni. Either way, it is clear athletic success has not had a strong positive impact on alumni giving to academic programs.

Research Question 3:

Thus, we turn to an examination of the relationship between giving to athletic programs and giving to academic programs. The data in Table 1 provide strong support for the assumption that giving to athletics undermines giving to academics, particularly for non-alumni. Over the time period considered, the average academic gift by non-alumni has fallen significantly, while the average gift to athletics has significantly increased. Since 1994, the average academic gift by a non-alum has fallen $671.35, while the average non-alum gift to athletics has increased $962.88. While the effects of winning athletic seasons on alumni donations are not quite as dramatic, the trends suggest that amounts donated to athletics are negatively associated with alumni decisions related to academic giving. There has been no significant change in alumni giving to academics in terms of total dollars donated. However, alumni have significantly increased their giving to athletics, and now donate a significantly larger percentage of their gift to the athletic department. In 1994, 40.4% of the average alum gift was targeted to intercollegiate athletics. By 2002, alums donated 56.7% of their gift to athletics.

It is clear that proportional giving by alums increasingly favors athletics (Table 3). Fiscal year 2002 saw an *increase* in total dollars donated by alumni of over $840,000. Over 81% of this incremental revenue was directed toward the intercollegiate athletic department. This resembles the allocation of incremental revenue by non-alumni, who allocated 83.9% of their additional giving to athletics. For every $100 of new revenue raised from major donors by the University of Oregon, over 80% is being directed to the athletic department.

"The role of athletic success in influencing giving behavior needs to be further clarified, considering the susceptibility of different groups to changing gift patterns based on athletic team success."

Even with the large increases in numbers of total donors since 1994, academic giving struggles to remain stable while donations to athletics experience huge growth. In three out of the past five years (1998, 2000, 2001), the total dollars donated to academics by non-alumni has fallen despite annual increases in the number of non-alumni donors. Total dollars donated to academics by alumni fell in only one year (2000), again despite an increase in the total number of donors. This suggests new donors are not making academic gifts, and current donors are shifting dollars from academic giving to donations directed to the athletic program. Additionally, as discussed above, proportional giving by alumni is predominantly directed to the athletic program. If these trends continue, total academic giving will fall for both alumni and non-alumni despite continued increases in the total numbers of both types of donors.

Further analysis examined the number of donors allocating their entire gift to either intercollegiate athletics or academics (Table 1). Since 1994, the percentage of alumni donors allocating their entire gift to athletics has increased from 26.8% to 38.7%. During that same time period, the percentage of alumni allocating their entire gift to academics has fallen from

Table 3

Proportional Giving to Academics and Athletics

Year	Alum Donors	Total Donation	Incremental Donation	Athletic Donation	Athletic Change	% of Inc. Donation to Athletic	Academic Donation	Academic Change	% of Inc. Donation to Acad.
1994	508	$1,391,528		$513,135			845,972		
1995	671	$1,932,050	$540,521	$728,142	$215,006	39.78%	$1,147,410	$301,437	55.7%
1996	731	$2,010,959	$78,908	$778,164	$50,021	63.39%	$1,179,863.24	$32,453.24	41.13%
1997	832	$2,318,526	$307,567	$983,790	$205,625	66.86%	$1,248,108	$68,244	22.19%
1998	907	$2,506,467	$187,941	$1,046,224	$62,434	33.22%	$1,295,232	$47,124	25.07%
1999	986	$2,842,499	$336,032	$1,080,813	$34,589	10.29%	$1,580,765	$285,532	84.97%
2000	1005	$2,850,159	$7,659	$1,207,628	$126,814	1655%	$1,501,872	($78,893)	-1029%
2001	1198	$3,868,653	$1,018,493	$1,770,068	$562,440	55.22%	$1,903,466.26	$401,594	39.43%
2002	1385	$4,711,354	$842,701	$2,456,366	$686,297	81.44%	$1,976,768	$73,302	8.70%
Year	Non-Alum Donors	Total Donation	Incremental Donation	Athletic Donation	Athletic Change	% of Inc. Donation to Athletic	Academic Donation	Academic Change	% of Inc. Donation to Acad.
1994	271	$703,787		$283,029			$336,077		
1995	351	$990,894	$287,107	$434,734	$151,704	52.84%	$449,631	$113,553	39.55%
1996	389	$1,012,006	$21,112	$381,920	(52,814)	-250%	$511,169	$61,538	291%
1997	481	$1,313,298	$301,291	$591,783	$209,863	69.65%	$536,887	$25,718	8.54%
1998	507	$1,323,122	$9,824	$693,550	$101,766	1035%	$438,129	($98,758)	-1005%
1999	562	$1,529,398	$206,275	$706,383	$12,832	6.22%	$583,311	$145,181	70.38%
2000	610	$1,586,356	$56,958	$792,231	$85,847	150.7%	$566,470	($16,840)	-29.5%
2001	745	$1,912,936	$326,579	$1,189,519	$397,287	121.6%	$510,176	($56,294)	-17.2%
2002	924	$2,705,804	$792,868	$1,854,717	$665,198	83.9%	$525,561	$15,385	1.94%

41.5% to 30.5%. Together, these findings are most likely the result of one or both of the following effects: some alumni are reducing or eliminating gifts to academics while increasing gifts to athletics, and/or some previous academic donors have stopped contributing and new alumni donors are making more gifts to athletics than academics. The pattern is similar for non-alumni, where the percentage allocating their entire gift to athletics has risen from 42.1% to 63.5%, and the corresponding percentage of non-alumni donors allocating their entire gift to academics has fallen from 26.6% to 12.8%. Increased giving to athletics is negatively associated with the academic giving of both alumni and non-alumni at the University of Oregon.

Again, the data were further analyzed by reducing donors to a group donating their entire gift to athletics, a group donating their entire gift to academics and a group splitting their gift. As discussed above, for both alumni and non-alumni the percentage of donors allocating their entire gift to athletics has increased while the percentage allocating their entire gift to academics has decreased. The percentage of alumni split-gift donors has remained relatively stable. However, the percentage of non-alumni split-gift donors has fallen to less than 25%, suggesting that non-alumni donors making a first gift to athletics are not subsequently making gifts to academics.

Furthermore, alumni split-gift donors are favoring athletics in the allocation of their split gift (Table 2). The percentage of gift allocated by alumni split-gift donors to athletics has risen from 38.1% to 52.9% of the total gift, while the percentage allocated to academics has fallen from 55.4% to 31.7%. In terms of actual dollars, alumni split-gift donors made an average gift to athletics of $1,183.33 in 1994. That amount rose to an average gift of $2,237.66 in 2002. Academic gifts, on the other hand, fell from $1,721.89 in 1994 to $1,340.98 in 2002. Again, the data show an increase in giving to athletics associated with reduced academic giving—even by alumni.

The overwhelming conclusion that can be drawn from this data is, at least at the University of Oregon, the increasing success of athletics-related fundraising has been and is associated with reduced giving to the academic mission of the institution. Perhaps most troubling is the possible negative influence on alumni giving. While lagging behind the significant changes in non-alumni donor behavior, all of the trends suggest that alumni giving behavior is moving in a similar direction—toward athletics.

With respect to the three research questions, the following conclusions are offered:

- Both alumni and non-alumni make gifts to both athletic and academic programs. Nearly 70% of alumni donors examined made a gift to the intercollegiate athletic department, casting doubt on the assertion that only a small percentage of alumni make athletics related gifts.
- At least contextually, there is evidence that a winning program may significantly influence the giving behavior of alumni. Alumni appear to give significantly more to the athletics program as program success increases. Alumni academic giving may not be influenced as strongly, though there are some indications that athletic success may encourage a reallocation of donors' institutional contributions with a discernable shift toward athletics.
- Both alumni and non-alumni show an increasing preference toward directing their gifts to the intercollegiate athletics department-at the expense of the donations to academic programs. Sperber's (2000) assertion that giving to athletics undermines academic giving is strongly supported.

Implications

The current study yields several important implications for future research. Issues surrounding donor motivations and institutional cultivation strategies will be critical to both a conceptual and practical understanding of institutional fundraising.

Most studies investigating the motives of donors to athletic programs have found at least some component of tangible benefit to the donor as a main determinant of the donor's behavior. Most recently, Mahony, Gladden, and Funk (2003) and Gladden, Mahony, and Apostolopoulou (2003) identify priority seating for football and basketball as the most important motive for an athletic department contribution, overwhelming any social motives. Earlier research on the Athletics Contributions Questionnaire Revised Edition II (Staurowsky, Parkhouse, & Sachs, 1996) and the Motivation of Athletics Donors (Verner, Hecht, & Fansler, 1998) both revealed a social motive for giving, defined by Staurowsky, Parkhouse, and Sachs as "the social interaction that occurs for people who follow teams and attend games" (pg. 270). However, both studies included one or more factors that could be considered tangible in nature. The availability of tangible benefit to the potential donor may in fact be pulling donors to make gifts to athletics instead of academics, where tangible benefit often requires more significant giving. A focus on tangible benefits offers one possible explanation for our findings. In exchange for a $1,000 gift to University of Oregon athletic department, a donor receives access to preferential seating at

athletic events, preferred parking, and invitations to athletics-related social events. On the other hand, a $1,000 gift to an academic unit, while entitling the donor to recognition as a member of the President's Club is accompanied by little if any tangible benefit. Therefore, the exchange, from the donor's perspective, may be seen as more valuable for a gift to athletics than to academics. Interestingly, athletic donors in the Gladden et al. (2003) study listed both a desire to help student-athletes in the form of scholarships and educational opportunity, and supporting the university as a whole in the top five reasons for making a donation. Future research should examine both whether donors are aware of any separation in athletic versus academic giving, and if donor behavior would change if such distinctions were more salient. It is quite plausible that donors view a donation to the athletic department as the best of both worlds: the donor is helping students and the university while at the same time receiving significant personal benefit. Such a view would help explain the shifts to athletic donations observed at the University of Oregon.

Furthermore, it is possible that our results begin to offer clarification to the model of individual donor behavior proposed by Brady et al. (2002). The authors propose a joint effects model of donor behavior to higher education institutions, whereby donors use both a services model focused on service value and satisfaction, and a philanthropic effects model centered on organizational identification, perceived need, and philanthropic predisposition in forming intent to give. However, no clarification of when their services model or philanthropic effects model would predominate over the other in explaining donor behavior was offered. It seems plausible, if not likely, that donations made in exchange for tangible donor benefit would be more subject to the services model than to the philanthropic effects model. Such reasoning would be consistent with our results of increased athletic giving associated with increased athletic winning, and with earlier studies indicating a positive relationship between winning and giving (Rhoads & Gerking, 2000; Grimes & Chressanths, 1994). Academic giving, on the other hand, appears to be more dominated by the philanthropic effects model, suggesting these donations may be less susceptible to the fluctuations in athletic success. Again, this argument would be consistent with the alumni academic giving at the University of Oregon.

In an environment of heavy competition for donors and their gifts (Greenfield, 2002), the ability of athletic departments to offer a valuable tangible benefit in exchange for a gift may attract donors who would otherwise make an academic gift. This suggests that the organizational structure of the institution's development department may be an important factor. Where athletic and academic development officers have differing reporting structures, competition may more easily ensue, allowing athletics to capitalize on the more valuable tangible benefits typically available to athletics donors than to academic donors. Where both athletics and academic fundraisers report through the same lines, more cooperation would be expected, perhaps minimizing the negative impact to academic giving, either by offering similar tangible benefit for academic gifts, or by controlling the extent to which tangible benefits are offered for athletics gifts.

Consistent with the above argument is a need to better understand the role of athletics fundraising in recruiting donors to the institution. Two commonly prevailing views of the benefit of athletic fundraising are that it brings new donors to the institution, and that it captures funds that would not have been donated to the institution through other mechanisms (i.e., academic giving). The evidence at the University of Oregon suggests that while athletics-based fundraising has been successful at recruiting new institutional donors, such recruitment is coming at a price to academic giving. Our data suggest the institution is not successfully transitioning new donors from athletics-only into split donors (academics and athletics). Future research needs to more clearly examine if, when and how this transition takes place, both from a donor decision-making view, and from an institutional cultivation view. The literature on social identification and identity salience may be relevant, with a key question being: Is it possible to move from a state of identification with a specific team or department, to a broader relationship with the institution as a whole? To the extent that organizational identification and identity salience drive donor behavior (Arnett et al., 2003; Mael & Ashforth, 1992), the nature and direction of identification may be crucial determinants in cultivating athletic donors to also support the academic mission of the institution.

Conclusion

While the data considered in this study came from only one institution, and therefore lack generalizability, we would expect to identify similar trends at other, similar institutions across the U.S. The results of this single-institution study indicate the need for future research that includes a broader cross-section of NCAA IA institutions to clarify the impact of intercollegiate athletics and athletics-related giving on academic giving to the sponsoring institution.

Future work needs to focus on the differing decision processes and motives for giving by alumni and non-

alumni, as well as differences between athletic, academic, and split-gift donors. The data considered in this study are entirely historical, and while valuable in identifying trends in giving behavior, they provide little insight into donor decision processes and motivations. Additionally, this work should be expanded and included in research on the impact of successful intercollegiate athletic teams on donor behavior. The role of athletic success in influencing giving behavior needs to be further clarified, considering the susceptibility of different groups to changing gift patterns based on athletic team success. Finally, this research only included donors making annual gifts of $1,000 more. Future research should investigate whether lower level donors exhibit similar or different giving behaviors.

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